

# Understanding & Dismantling Privilege

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## ***“Do Stuff!”***

**James W. Loewen**

### **Abstract**

James W. Loewen presented “Do Stuff!” as a keynote address at the 2016 White Privilege Conference (WPC) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He shares why people who seek racial justice need to do stuff to bring it about; simply having unracist attitudes accomplishes little. Therefore, this article notes four ongoing movements to join and suggests ten different arenas that cry out for action.

*Keywords:* Race; Education; White supremacy; Teaching; Strategies

James W. Loewen holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from Harvard University. He is known for his surveying of school textbooks of American history where he has found a blend of misinformation, blind nationalism, and bland optimism. An educator on race relations, he is the best-selling author of multiple pieces including "Lies My Teacher Told Me" and "The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader."

"We agree to take action in our own circle of power when we return to our workplace, community spaces, and social networks."

— WPC "*Comprehensive Commitment*"<sup>1</sup>

## Keynote

I grew up in Decatur, Illinois, an industrial city in the center of the state. The Nichols family lived next-door. Mrs. Nichols came from Mattoon, southeast of Decatur, and ultimately from the South. That probably explains why they named their Boxer dog, a fine pet, friendly to all in the neighborhood, "Dixie."

Dixie was not friendly to everyone, however. Every other week, at 8 A.M., the Nicholse's maid came to clean their house. She would park on the street and lay on her horn, honking until Mrs. Nichols noticed and waved from the front door. Her wave signaled that Dixie was now locked safely in the basement and would not attack her. The maid was African American. When Dixie did this to more than one Black person, over time, I concluded that the dog was generalizing by race.

Years later, living in Mississippi, a White neighbor told me a similar story about *his* boxer. To this man, the dog supplied marvelous confirmation that racism was "natural" — even *dogs* instinctively distrusted Black people. (I trust *you* to see through that "reasoning.") Mrs. Nichols was not *that* racist, so she felt embarrassed, rather than confirmed, by her dog's dislike of African Americans.

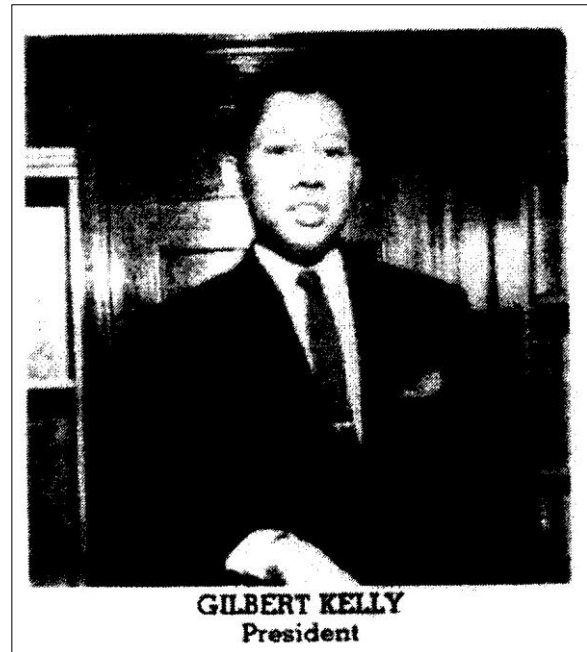


Image 1: Kelly was salutatorian and class president

When I was a junior in college, I asked myself: How is it *competent* for me to be a sociology major, yet I have never lived outside the Midwest? So I spent part of my junior year "abroad" in Mississippi. That experience changed my life and helped lead to a half century of work on race relations. Mrs. Nichols knew about my commitment, because I kept returning to Mississippi and eventually spent seven years living there, teaching at Tougaloo College, a Black institution. Several times on my visits home during those years, she engaged me in conversations about race relations. Each time she invoked the name of Gilbert Kelly, a Black classmate of her younger son. He had excelled academically and politically in junior high and high school, eventually winning a scholarship to the University of Illinois. To Mrs. Nichols, Kelly's success proved that anybody could do it. Therefore, she concluded, the fact that most African Americans did not succeed like Kelly must be their own fault.

I argued with Mrs. Nichols, always politely, always aware that our relationship was far more than her backwardness on race, also knowing that my parents' connections with the Nicholoses trumped my own. Maybe I got through, however. Something did. The last time I saw Mrs. Nichols was after the memorial service for my father. She asked me to drop by their house. I did. She then had me sit down and said to me, "You know, I often brought up the example of Gilbert Kelly when we talked about race. I just wanted you to know that I now see that I was wrong." She went on to tell me that she now realized how hard it was for African Americans to excel in Decatur. She finally understood something about White privilege.

I want to explain to you why I told you that story. I did not tell it to brag: "See, my soft approach worked!" I did not tell it to encourage you not to give up, although I *do* want you never to give up. Nothing of the sort. Yes, I may have gotten through to her. So what? I told you that story to suggest that getting through to her was meaningless. Mrs. Nichols was now 80 years old. She was not going to do anything with her newly found insight. No improvement in the lives of African Americans in Decatur, Illinois, resulted from her conversion. I had not really *done* anything.

I told you that story to get to the title of this talk: "*Do Stuff!*" And, this is a wonderful time to do stuff. We're not isolated any more, partly owing to this conference. We have momentum. We have at least four movements, just about race relations, that are going on right now:

1. The Black Lives Matter movement, of course.

2. The movement to tear down the privilege that we have conferred for more than a century on the Confederate cause — in textbooks, on monuments, and on leaders of the Confederacy by naming things for them across the United States.

3. The movement, still fragmented but gaining force, to end sundown towns — communities that for decades were "all-White" on purpose.

4. The efforts on campuses from SUNY Plattsburgh in the northeast to UCSD in the southwest to improve race relations, expand the number of students and professors of color, and challenge the anti-Black and anti-woman culture at many fraternities.

In addition, new initiatives are dealing with issues of sexual orientation, transgender, and people with disabilities.

I understand that some of you are pessimists, and I think I understand why. It can shatter your sense of possibility to wake up to yet another exoneration of yet another outrageous case of police murder.

But consider: That sort of thing has been going on since the old slave patrol days. Today, however, with our cellphones and our protests, police bad behavior is getting challenged more widely and more effectively.

Consider: Textbooks and monuments have been lying about the Confederate cause for more than a century. Today, however, inadvertently sparked by Dylann Roof's murder of nine African Americans in Charleston, South Carolina, we are getting these pro-Confederate monuments melted down, moved to museums, or at least "contextualized."

Consider: Most sundown towns formed about a century ago. Today, however, a few of them are apologizing for their White supremacy and stating that they have given it up.

Consider: After making real efforts to desegregate in the 1970s, many college campuses have been tolerating White privilege and sexism and other “-isms” for several decades. Today, however, students have forced a new atmosphere that questions this “business as usual.”

It's like the Civil Rights Movement! There's something for us to do every day!

My talk is going to suggest 10 different arenas that cry out for our activity. Some you've thought about; maybe you're already active in one or more of these areas. Others may be new to you.

I'm going to organize these arenas biographically, using the imaginary biography of Gilbert Kelly. It has to be imaginary, because the real Gilbert Kelly seems to have vanished from the world, certainly from the Internet.

### **1. We can expose and challenge environmental and ecological privilege.**

Gilbert Kelly gets born into a neighborhood, right?<sup>2</sup> Let's suppose his parents live in the largest single suburb of Philadelphia, Lower Merion Township, just west of here. In 1997, lawyers on behalf of the Barnes Foundation, a stunning museum of neo-Impressionist and African art, engaged me and a city planner at Penn as expert witnesses. The case was fascinating. The Foundation had gone under African American control, as Mr. Barnes had set it up to do before he died in 1951. Lower Merion was giving the Barnes a hard time,

partly *because* it was under Black control. The head of the Barnes accused township officials of “thinly veiled racism.” As a result, they sued him for libel. The other expert witness and I proceeded to prove that Lower Merion indeed did show evidence of racism, not thinly veiled in the least.

Most of the African American residents of Lower Merion were concentrated into one neighborhood, Ardmore. (They still are.) The other neighborhoods, including the rich part of town where the Barnes was, were overwhelmingly White. We mapped the population of Lower Merion by race. Then we mapped the distribution of “disamenities” in Lower Merion.

What are disamenities? They are institutions that cities must have, but that most people don't want *near them*. They include:

— “Transfer stations” (a euphemism for dumps).

— The yard where the township stores its piles of sand and salt and snowplows.

— Halfway houses for criminal offenders just out of prison, people with mental illness, etc.

— Homeless shelters.

— The storage yard for school buses, city buses, and other township vehicles.

In Lower Merion, most of these disamenities — by pure chance! — happened to wind up in Ardmore, the one interracial neighborhood<sup>3</sup>. This policy — and it *never* happens by chance — is one reason why housing values in interracial areas do not appreciate as rapidly as in

White areas. In turn, differential housing appreciation contributes to the astounding Black/White wealth gap.

Lower Merion is not alone. It's not even unusual. Part of White privilege — and rich privilege too — is the ability to influence city agencies and the city government to get NIMBY — "Not In My Back Yard." Yes, we have to put schizophrenics somewhere — my cousin is schizophrenic so I understand — but "Not In My Back Yard." Yes, we have to plow and salt the streets in the winter, so we have to have trucks and salt piles, I understand. But a truck yard "would just not be keeping with the residential character and architectural values of this neighborhood."

If I have described *your* town, then *you* can fix it, or at least expose it. You don't have to be a sociologist or city planner to do so. Just mark up the maps!<sup>4</sup>

## 2. We can confront biased teacher expectations.

I have a whole "rap" on teacher expectations already in print: Chapter 2, "Expecting Excellence," in *Teaching What Really Happened* (2010), so I won't repeat it here. Somehow, despite the bias that teachers in my home town showed toward Black students, Gilbert Kelly persevered. Not one teacher when he attended the Decatur Public Schools was African American. Still, at least one teacher did believe in him, I'm sure.

Mrs. Nichols was right in a way: Gilbert Kelly's achievements did prove that African Americans *could* succeed. Of course, no one has ever claimed that success was *impossible*. Look at Percy Julian or Constance Baker Motley. Look at Frederick Douglass! Does his successful career prove

that slavery is an equal opportunity system? The point is: Teacher expectations are perhaps the most important single factor in causing students to achieve excellence. Most of us are successful today because someone believed in us and conveyed that belief *to* us. One way to change teachers' biased expectations is by exposing teachers to the teacher expectations literature.<sup>5</sup>

## 3. We can expose bias in K-12 schooling.

If Gilbert Kelly had grown up in Champaign, 30 miles northeast of Decatur, he would have been in luck. The Champaign Public Schools had a Gifted and Talented Program intended for outstanding students like him — except not for *his* race. Until recently, European American students in Champaign were *11 times* more likely, per capita, to be designated "Gifted and Talented," compared to African American children.

Champaign was hardly unusual. Across the United States, schools use "Gifted & Talented" programs to entice White children to stay in desegregated public elementary schools while meeting their parents' desires to avoid having their child ever be in the minority. Advanced Placement and I.B. courses do the same in high school. These programs aren't necessarily bad in their nature, but the racial disproportion is terrible. Not only do White and Asian students get smaller classes, by definition more is expected of them. So they do more. On top of all that, the biased policies give non-Black students a ready-made excuse for White privilege: African American students simply aren't as "gifted and talented."

The Champaign chapter of the NAACP took their district to court and won a splendid consent decree, telling the district what it had to do to remedy this astounding

inequity. But even without an organization, just one of us, by ourself, can investigate a local school district and publicize the inequalities that we find, in Gifted and Talented enrollments, in the number of computers in majority Black classrooms compared to non-Black classrooms, whatever.<sup>6</sup>

#### **4. You can get your college to make the ACT and SAT exams optional.**

Research shows that when most African Americans read the word "environment," they think first of the social or family environment — what kind of environment does that child come from? Most European Americans, on the other hand, think first of the *natural* environment — ecology, pollution. Both usages are perfectly OK, but items based on the former will tend to trip up Whites, while items based on the latter may confuse African Americans. Similarly, SAT items based on words with Anglo-Saxon origins benefit WASPs, while items based on words with Latin origins benefit Latinos.

Unfortunately, the Educational Testing Service privileges White items. No item that favors African Americans or Mexican Americans can ever get onto the SAT, because it will not "behave statistically." For the same reason, no item on which girls outscore boys is likely to be included on the math part of the SAT.

Do bad SAT scores make a difference? You bet. I recall one of my best students at Tougaloo College. "Marilyn" taught herself the chi-square statistical test, which I didn't include in my "Methods and Statistics" course because it was too hard for the time we had. Then she took the GRE, sibling to the SAT, got a low score, and concluded that she was not very smart. I knew better, but

then the school she wanted to enter for graduate work also concluded from her GRE score that she was not very smart.

What can we do about these problems? Many colleges and universities have made the ACT and SAT tests optional. Making them optional is one important step toward decreasing their prestige. In turn, decreasing their prestige diminishes the harm they do, including the harm to students' own definitions of self. Very few colleges need SAT and ACT scores to admit students, because most colleges accept more than 80% of their applicants. They can use high school grades, course selection in high school, recommendations, and other information to filter out the bottom 20%.<sup>7</sup> Even prestigious competitive schools like Bates and Middlebury have made these tests optional. So can all colleges.<sup>8</sup>

#### **5. We can remove White supremacy from U.S. (and world) history in high school.**

Do you remember Vasco da Gama? He was the Portuguese explorer who was the first European to sail around Africa and reach India.<sup>9</sup> All high school U.S. history textbooks heroify Da Gama. They present him in an awestruck tone that tells us he was great and we are to think well of him. But the authors never tell what Da Gama *did* with India, once he reached it.

In fact, Da Gama's journeys, like Columbus's, prove to be a mixture of heroic exploits and horrifying exploitation. Like the Spaniards, the Portuguese denied the humanity of non-Christians. To Muslims in particular, they did anything they wanted. For all the "great explorers," it's the *second* voyages we need to examine.

Here is a detail from da Gama's second trip to India, in 1506. Da Gama's ships had

just finished shelling Calicut to try to force the city to stop trading with Muslim Arabs and switch their business exclusively to Christian Portuguese. Calicut had been doing business with Arab traders for centuries. Many families had intermarried. Many Muslims now lived in Calicut. Its officials didn't want to agree, but they also didn't want to get shelled again. They were mulling the Portuguese request when 18 Moorish ships and boats came to the port from the west. They had not known that the Portuguese were there. A Portuguese historian tells what happened next:

[The Portuguese] caravels went to them, and the Moors could not fly, as they were laden, and the caravels brought them to [Da Gama]. . . . He then ordered the boats to go and plunder the small vessels, which were sixteen, and the two ships, in which they found rice and many jars of butter, and many bales of stuffs. . . . Then [Da Gama] commanded them to cut off the hands and ears and noses of all the crews, and put all that into one of the small vessels. . . . When all the Indians had been thus [done to], he ordered their feet to be tied together, as they had no hands with which to untie them; and in order that they should not untie them with their teeth, he ordered them to strike upon their teeth with staves, and they knocked them down their throats; and they were thus put on board, heaped up upon the top of each other, mixed up with the blood which streamed from them; and he ordered mats and dry leaves to be spread over them, and the sails to be set for the shore, and the vessel set on fire; and there were more than 800 Moors; and the small vessel with the friar, with all the hands and ears,

was also sent on shore under sail, without being fired. These vessels went at once on shore, where many people flocked together to put out the fire, and draw out those whom they found alive, upon which they made great lamentations.<sup>10</sup>

No wonder the famous South African musician Hugh Masekela recorded an anticolonialist song with the refrain, "Vasco da Gama was no friend of mine."

Leaving out this information, instead heroifying da Gama, amounts to White history, not history. Leaving out what Columbus did on his second voyage amounts to White history, not history. It's also boring. No wonder most U.S. students rank history/social studies their "least liked" subject in high school. No wonder the gap between the performance of European and Asian Americans, compared to African, Latino, and Native Americans, is larger in history/social studies than any other subject.

More than any other school subject, U.S. history is about *us*. It should help students understand why, even today, with a Black president and all, White families have more than 10 times the average wealth of black families. United States history should help all students understand that European Americans aren't racist owing to nature, but to *history*. U.S. history courses should be our ally in the struggle against White privilege and for "liberty and justice for all." Instead, too often, they are our enemy.

We can change that. Most social studies and history teachers did not choose their field so they could maintain White supremacy. They are simply teaching the way they were taught. Many of them are burned out, because they know their classes bore students. We can reach them with

"new" (to them) information, like this passage about da Gama. If we don't reach them, who will?<sup>11</sup>

**6. We can correct wrong information about the Confederacy.**

In my keynote at White Privilege Conference 17, meeting in Philadelphia in April of 2016, I conducted a little referendum about secession. I asked, "Why did the South secede?" I supplied the four answers that audiences commonly give:

- (1) for slavery.
- (2) for states' rights.
- (3) because of the election of Lincoln.
- (4) over issues about tariffs and taxes.

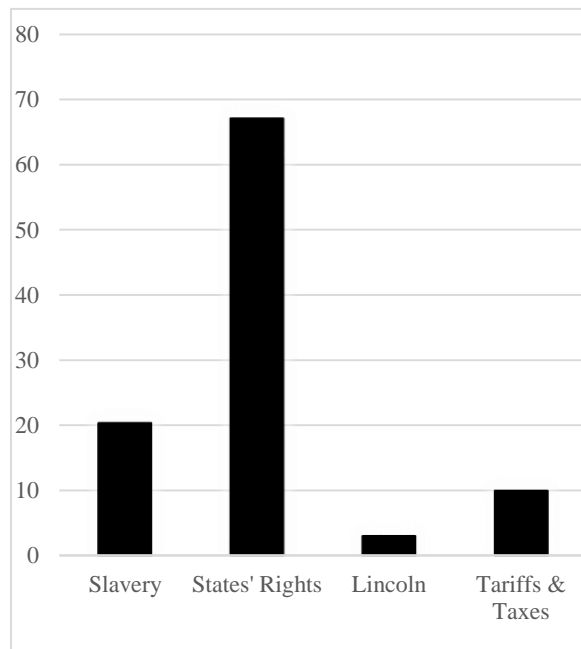


Figure 1: Percentage choosing each alternative, U.S., c.2010-16

Then the approximately 2,800 people in attendance voted. About 45% said slavery,

35% states' rights, a handful Lincoln, and maybe 18% tariffs and taxes.

This distribution was somewhat better than my national results, shown in Figure 1. Still, the results were disappointing. After all, the fracturing of the United States by secession and the ensuing Civil War was the most important thing ever to occur in our nation. *Every* American should be able to tell why the South seceded.

Nor are the causes mysterious. As they left the United States, the Southern states told why. South Carolina left first. On Christmas Eve, 1860, its secession convention published "Declaration Of The Immediate Causes Which Induce And Justify The Secession Of South Carolina From The Federal Union." It begins its discussion of causes with these words:

We assert that fourteen of the States have deliberately refused for years past to fulfill their constitutional obligations, and we refer to their own statutes for the proof.

The Constitution of the United States, in its fourth Article, provides as follows:

No person held to service or labor in one State under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such, service or labor, but shall be delivered up, on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due.

This is of course the Fugitive Slave Clause in the Constitution, so the 45% plurality at WPC17 who answered slavery were correct. Indeed, concern about slavery



permeates this secession document. Mississippi is even more forthright: "Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery — the greatest material interest of the world."

What about the next largest contingent in the audience, those who voted for states' rights? The declaration goes on to make clear that South Carolina was not *for* states' rights, but *against* them. Indeed, South Carolina calls out the roll of states whose attempts to claim rights have offended slaveowners:

The States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa, have enacted laws which either nullify the acts of Congress, or render useless any attempt to execute them. In many of these States the fugitive is discharged from the service of labor claimed. . . .

For the record, the handful of attendees who chose the election of Lincoln were not wrong. To be sure, his victory was a trigger, not an underlying cause, but South Carolina's delegates were clear about it:

A geographical line has been drawn across the Union, and all the States north of that line have united in the election of a man to the high office of President of the United States whose opinions and purposes are hostile to Slavery.

Of course, that sentence makes clear that again, Lincoln's election was problematic due to his opposition to slavery. So it all comes back to the s-word.

What about tariffs and taxes? A sizable minority at WPC17 chose that alternative, but like states' rights, it is flatly wrong. South Carolinians had no issue with the tariff under which the United States was operating in 1860. Why would they? It was written by a Virginia planter and set extremely low rates.

South Carolina's delegates, as well as other Confederate leaders, repeatedly made clear that it wasn't just slavery that motivated them, but White supremacy. Ten days after the Confederacy adopted its new constitution, Vice President Alexander Stephens delivered his "Cornerstone Speech," which became quite famous. He castigated the Declaration of Independence for declaring that "all men are created equal." He boasted:

Our new Government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery — subordination to the superior race — is his natural and moral condition.<sup>12</sup>

Converting the Confederate cause after the fact into a struggle for states' rights makes it heroic. It removes slavery and White supremacy from their central role in the most important thing that ever happened in this country. It removes Black agency — the fact that African Americans, by escaping slavery, were giving the lie to the claim that slavery was good for them. Yet today, most Americans, including most K-12 teachers, get the Confederate cause all wrong.

Since the historical record is clear, why do so many Americans make this grotesque error? To answer this question, we need to examine when this line of thought took over.

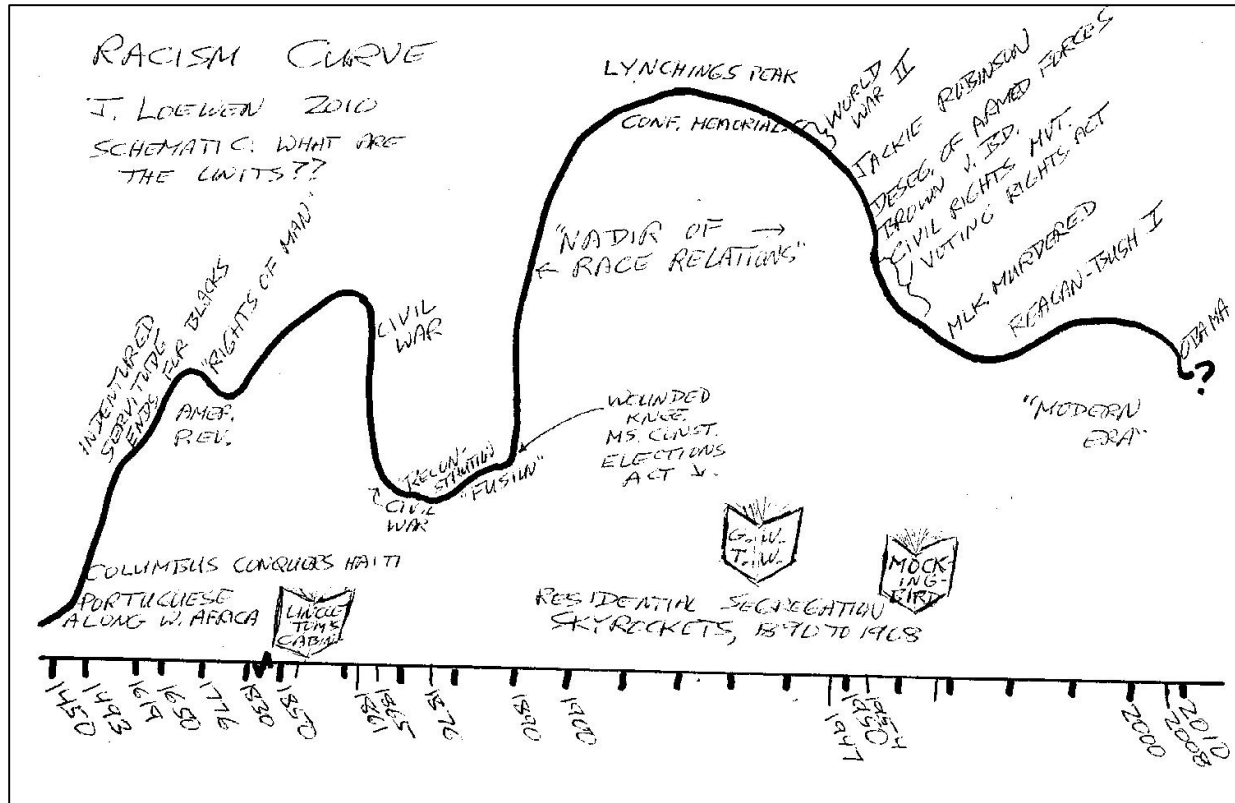
Between 1890 and about 1940 occurred what historians call the “Nadir” of race relations.<sup>13</sup> During these years, the Confederates finally won the Civil War. Yes, it ended in 1865, but they won it in 1890, and in at least four ways. First, they won it in our textbooks. Even today, most U.S. history textbooks mystify why the South seceded. Second, they won the enshrinement of White supremacy in their own states and even across the United States. Third, they won it on the ground, such as at Gettysburg, with misleading monuments. Fourth, they won it in our culture. To see that victory, compare the portraits of African Americans in the best-selling novel of all time, also the best-selling movie of all time, *Gone With the Wind*, to those in the best-selling novel of the nineteenth century, also the best-selling play of that century, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Harriet Beecher Stowe presented slavery as it was — a cruel system from which African Americans longed to escape. Margaret Mitchell presents slavery as it *never* was — an ideal system whose passing we are to lament.

Between about 1890 and about 1940, the United States forgot what the Civil War was about. In those decades things steadily grew worse for African Americans. All but 1 of the 18 U.S. history textbooks I have studied simply leave out the Nadir. It doesn't fit with their overall storyline — a tale of unbroken automatic progress.

During the Nadir lynchings reached their all-time high. A new Ken Burns TV series just opened, *Jackie Robinson*. Do you know that he was *not* the first Black ball player in the Major Leagues? He was the first *after the Nadir*. During the Nadir, North as well as South, Whites forced African Americans not just from baseball but from skilled occupations like carpenter and government

jobs like postal carriers. White riots even forced African Americans out of brutal hard work like unloading at the docks. The Woodrow Wilson administration, the most racist in American history since Buchanan, segregated every workplace and cafeteria in the federal government.

Below is my sketch of the level of racism over time in the United States. It is an impressionistic first draft; note that there are no units on the left side of the scale. At the same time, it is the only such effort I know of, so maybe it's better than nothing. Since it portrays racism, the Nadir appears as the large hump in the middle.



Sketch 1: Loewen's Sketch of the level of racism over time in the United States

Most students today never heard of the Nadir. They don't know that lynchings peaked then, not during slavery. They don't know that segregation was national. They don't know that only one hotel in downtown Philadelphia would let Jackie Robinson stay there, so that's the hotel the Dodgers used for many years after 1947. They don't know that in northern cities like Philadelphia, African Americans could not get industrial jobs, couldn't even be clerks in department stores, until the third quarter of the twentieth century. Even after 1975, many unions still kept out African Americans in Philadelphia.

Getting the Confederacy wrong makes a difference today. It miseducates all of us — Whites and non-Whites alike. These monuments, as well as naming schools, forts, and highways for Confederate leaders, tell us to revere as heroes people who should

not be revered as heroes. Monuments were erected to revere these men precisely *because* of their work on behalf of White supremacy. Textbooks that lie and monuments that exalt help explain the reverence for the Confederate cause shown by people like Dylann Storm Roof, the murderer in Charleston, and Timothy McVeigh, the bomber in Oklahoma City. After the revulsion to Roof's rampage, we can challenge and take down Confederate symbols across the United States.<sup>14</sup>

**7. We can confirm the history of sundown towns and then help them to transcend it.**

During the Nadir of race relations, towns across the North went sundown — drove out their African American populations or took steps to ensure that none would ever come in. Growing up in Decatur, Gilbert Kelly

was surrounded by sundown towns. I don't know if Kelly knew that, but I know I did not. When I set forth to write *Sundown Towns* (2005), I expected to find maybe 10 such towns in Illinois, my home state, and 50 across the country. Not so. It turns out that 17 of 20 towns around Decatur were all-White on purpose. For the whole state, I now estimate 507 such communities, including most suburbs of Chicago, St. Louis, and Peoria. That's more than in any other state . . . except Pennsylvania. I think *this* fair state had probably 700. But I have confirmed only 25.

So, those of you from Pennsylvania, we need your help! At my website is a small paper, "How to Confirm Sundown Towns." Read it and do it and then send me the results. Then the interactive map of sundowns at my website will become more complete. You can then encourage the town to transcend its White supremacist past. And you don't have to be from Pennsylvania to do this! Every northern and border state has unconfirmed sundown towns.<sup>15</sup>

### 8. We can take a stand against the Washington "Redskins" and other Native American mascots.

Also during the Nadir, Whites exercised their privilege by appropriating Native American names, imagery, and even racial slurs to name their sports teams. Just before Gilbert Kelly was born in central Illinois, nearby Pekin named its teams the Chinks, because Pekin was named after Peking (Beijing), China. Nokomis High School, southwest of Decatur, chose "Redskins," perhaps because "Nokomis" is a Native American name. Pekin did give up "Chinks" in 1980, but "Redskins" are still all around us, including, most notoriously, in our nation's capital.

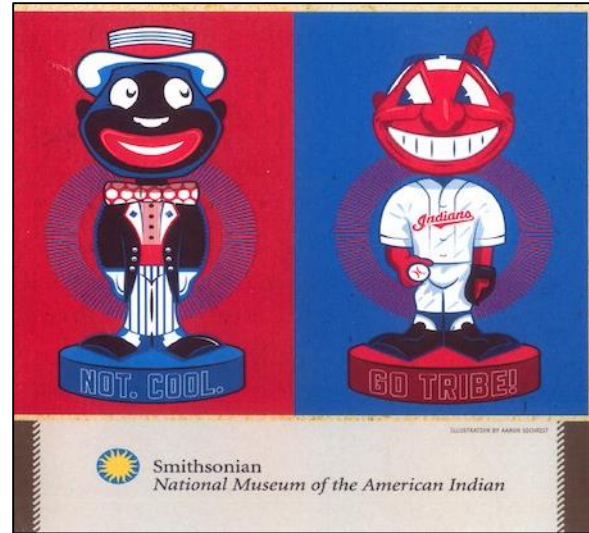


Figure 2: The National Museum of the American Indian paired these images for its symposium on Native mascots.

When Gilbert Kelly went off to college, the mascot at the University of Illinois was Chief Illiniwek. One person, Charlene Teters, started protesting, because she saw the harm this symbolism caused in her own family. Eventually she found allies, and in 2007, the U of I "retired" the chief. Last year I got the OAH, the Organization of American Historians, to come out officially against the name of the NFL franchise in Washington, D.C. In your state, high schools may still call their teams "Redskins" or "Braves and Squaws" or other appropriations of Native Americans for our viewing pleasure. Think creatively about what you can do about this problem — what organization you might bring to bear on it.<sup>16</sup>

### 9. You can make your college more open and more inviting to students and faculty of color.

I don't know what Gilbert Kelly experienced at the University of Illinois between 1959 and 1963. I do know that during the Nadir, African Americans could not live on campus. The faculty was then almost completely White. I suspect Kelly

was on his own. Hopefully he found someone who expected good performance from him.

In 1963, when Kelly was still there, I went to the U of I library and researched fraternity by-laws. Several fraternities stated openly that they were only open to "Whites," "Caucasians," and in two cases, "Aryans." That last term jolted me, because that's the term the Nazis used to differentiate Northern Europeans racially from Slavs, Greeks, and other "marginal" Whites. All too many fraternity and sorority chapters that have removed their openly discriminatory by-laws still have no African American members today. America watched on YouTube as members of Sigma Alpha Epsilon at the University of Oklahoma championed their exclusion of African Americans by singing on a bus, "You can hang him from a tree, but he'll never sign with me." I suggest that every chapter of SAE, Kappa Sigma, and Kappa Alpha should be asked to get their Confederate flag out of storage — you *know* they still have one — and burn it symbolically on their front lawns.

Beyond that, I'll not tell you how to get your college to take the next step toward eradicating White privilege. You know so much more than I do about what is going on where you teach or go to school. I'll just say, to those of us who are White, it's *our* problem too. We cannot expect African Americans to solve or even to bring up all the problems of race relations on our college campuses. At some schools, owing precisely to these problems, there aren't enough African Americans to do it! We Whites cheat ourselves when we let "our" student bodies, faculties, and fraternities and sororities stay overwhelmingly White.

## 10. Yours!

I cannot tell you what cause lights *your* fire. Maybe it's about equal rights and opportunities for people with disabilities. Maybe sexual orientation, or transgendered persons. I can only suggest that you *do stuff*.

Then, when we are old, unlike Mrs. Nichols, we can say — and it will be said about us — *we made a difference*.

<sup>1</sup> WPC, "Conference Facilitators Packet," [whiteprivilegeconference.com/pdf/WPC15-Facilitator-Packet.pdf](http://whiteprivilegeconference.com/pdf/WPC15-Facilitator-Packet.pdf), 4/2016.

<sup>2</sup> Actually, Kelly probably was born in a hospital. Logically, I should start with the inequalities facing babies of color and even fetuses of color in this country, but I'm not going to cover everything. Since I have never done anything myself about medical discrimination, I have no particular suggestions or methods to give you in that field.

<sup>3</sup> I need to point out that some of these disamenities can be perfectly good neighbors. A halfway house, for example, if adequately funded and well staffed, can be an asset to its block. Still, there is no defensible reason to pile them all up into one area.

<sup>4</sup> Robert. K. Lamb, "Suggestions for a Study of Your Hometown" (1952), offers down-to-earth suggestions on researching a town. The web has partly outmoded it, however.

<sup>5</sup> James W. Loewen, *Teaching What Really Happened* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009), 42–67, introduces that literature. Also see Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, "Teacher Expectations for the Disadvantaged," *Scientific American*, 248 #4 (4/1968), 21–25.

<sup>6</sup> James W. Loewen, "The Difference Race Makes," in Howard Ball et al., eds., *Multicultural Education in Colleges and Universities* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1998), 50–52, provides two examples of disparities in school systems.

<sup>7</sup> Why do they still require the SAT or ACT? One reason is that SAT/ACT scores correlate highly with family income. Therefore colleges that base admissions decisions substantially on these scores don't have to worry where their next dollar is coming from. Put another way, although SAT/ACT scores *look* meritocratic, to a considerable extent they confer that merit on students who are able to pay. Thus colleges don't have to choose students on ability to pay — the SAT does it for them! Thus the exams maintain the class structure, as well as the racial hierarchy, by cloaking the children of the privileged in meritocratic respectability.

<sup>8</sup> For more information to help you argue against the ACT and SAT, contact FairTest, [FairTest.org](http://FairTest.org). Cf. James W. Loewen, "Presentation," "Discussion," and "A Sociological View of Aptitude Tests," in Eileen Rudert, ed., *The Validity of Testing In Education and Employment* (Washington, DC: United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1993), 41–45, 58–62, 73–91.

<sup>9</sup> Incidentally, he was *not* the first person to sail around Africa. People I call Afro-Phoenicians had circumnavigated Africa more than 2,000 years earlier. See Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me About Christopher Columbus* (New York: New Press, 2014), 23.

<sup>10</sup> Gaspar Correa, *The Three Voyages of Vasco Da Gama* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1869), 331–332, [books.google.com/books?id=vDAMAAAIAAJ&pg=PA331&lpg=PA331&dq=%22ordered+the+boats+to+go+and+plunder%22&source=bl&ots=zbqf7BO-J&sig=SYzSycq6B2vZ0o3hA-560iHLwG8&hl=en&sa=X&ei=c9xJUuGZGLat4A0t7YGADA&ved=0CCwQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22commanded%20the m%20to%20cut%22%20&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=vDAMAAAIAAJ&pg=PA331&lpg=PA331&dq=%22ordered+the+boats+to+go+and+plunder%22&source=bl&ots=zbqf7BO-J&sig=SYzSycq6B2vZ0o3hA-560iHLwG8&hl=en&sa=X&ei=c9xJUuGZGLat4A0t7YGADA&ved=0CCwQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22commanded%20the m%20to%20cut%22%20&f=false)

<sup>11</sup> It might help to give teachers copies of James W. Loewen, *Teaching What Really Happened* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> These quotes and many others are collected in James W. Loewen and Edward H. Sebesta, eds., *The Confederate and Neo-Confederate Reader* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> "Nadir" is a common word meaning "low point." Historian Rayford Logan began to establish the term in his 1954 book, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir*, reprinted as *The Betrayal of the Negro* (New York: Macmillan Collier, 1965 [1954]). He used 1877–1901 in the subtitle of his book but actually treated 1877–1921. I use somewhat different dates — 1890 to the 1930s — but Logan's work infuses my thinking. Cf. C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001 [1955]).

<sup>14</sup> James W. Loewen, "Why do people believe myths about the Confederacy? Because our textbooks and monuments are wrong," Washington Post, 7/1/2015, [washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/07/01/why-do-people-believe-myths-about-the-confederacy-because-our-textbooks-and-monuments-are-wrong/](http://washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/07/01/why-do-people-believe-myths-about-the-confederacy-because-our-textbooks-and-monuments-are-wrong/), spurred citizens to challenge the Confederate monument in Montgomery County, Maryland, so it might be useful to you. Loewen, "Presentation to Commission Reviewing Baltimore's Public Confederate Monuments," 11/20/2015, [media.wix.com/ugd/ce643a\\_d6a81f24d8da4f8d91d462b38ac53420.pdf](http://media.wix.com/ugd/ce643a_d6a81f24d8da4f8d91d462b38ac53420.pdf), makes arguments against Baltimore's Confederate monuments that you might find applicable to yours.

<sup>15</sup> Resources include James W. Loewen, *Sundown Towns* (New York: New Press, 2005), [sundown.afro.illinois.edu/content.php?file=sundowntowns-whitemap.html](http://sundown.afro.illinois.edu/content.php?file=sundowntowns-whitemap.html), and [sundown.afro.illinois.edu/content.php?file=sundowntowns-howto.html](http://sundown.afro.illinois.edu/content.php?file=sundowntowns-howto.html)

<sup>16</sup> Resources include Jay Rosenberg, *In Whose Honor* (New Day Films, 1997), [pbs.org/pov/inwhosehonor/](http://pbs.org/pov/inwhosehonor/), and James W. Loewen, "Why Historians Should Demand the Redskins Change Their Name," available at [washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2015/04/30/organization-of-american-historians-calls-on-redskins-to-change-name-logo/](http://washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2015/04/30/organization-of-american-historians-calls-on-redskins-to-change-name-logo/)